

there's nothing there to hide by jellyfishes

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don't worry

Language: English

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Summary:

Will and Mike have been together for more than a year, and have successfully kept it a secret from their friends — Until now.

there's nothing there to hide

Author's Note:

Thank you anon for [this prompt](#) ! :) I hope you enjoy!

Castle Byers has become Mike and Will's *place* . It's a place of protection—it always has been, even before the Upside Down happened. When Jonathan and Will would spend hours inside the rickety walls of the fort, no matter the weather, Castle Byers was a place to escape the memories of their dad. And then it was a place for Will to hide from an other-worldly monster. And now it is a place for Will and Mike. They come here whenever they want time to themselves, without their moms coming to check on them or their friends' interruptions. They come here even in the winter, all bundled up in so many layers that they're forced to waddle like penguins, taking twice as long to make the trek through the woods. It's always worth it.

Now that it's nearly Christmas, they don't get to see each other as much as usual. There's so much to do—family vacations for Mike, driving to pick up Jonathan from college for Will, and endless amounts of present wrapping for both of them. They're desperately in need of some alone time, after almost two weeks of only seeing each other in class.

On the first day of Christmas break, Will hears his supercom crackling in the corner of his room and smiles. Mike is too far out of range for his words to come through clearly, but Will doesn't need them to. "On my way," he says, just in case Mike can hear him.

He slips his boots on and knocks on Jonathan's door. Their mom is still working, which is good because she probably wouldn't let him out alone after dark, despite it being years since the Upside Down reared its ugly head.

"Is it okay if I go out?" Will asks when Jonathan says *come in* . "I'll be back before dinner."

Jonathan shrugs. "Yeah, do you want the car?"

"No, I'm good," Will says. There'd be no use trying to drive through the woods. "See you!"

He hardly gets nervous in the dark anymore, but the little twinges of anxiety are still there as he makes his way through the shadows and tall, looming trees. He's relieved when he gets to Castle Byers and sees Mike's shape behind the curtain already.

"Hey, babe," Mike grins when Will pulls the curtain back and crawls inside. Will rolls his eyes at the nickname—Mike always tries to squeeze in as many pet names as he can whenever they're well and truly alone, simply because he can. And because it never fails to make Will blush, apparently. "I have something for you."

Will raises his eyebrows. Their first anniversary was a few months ago, and they planned on exchanging Christmas gifts with the entire Party next week.

"I didn't get you anything," Will says shamefully.

Mike laughs, shaking his head. "I didn't ask you to," he says. "And besides, it's sort of a gift for me, too."

He hands over a messily wrapped present, tape sticking out from odd angles. "Sorry, Nancy wasn't home to wrap it for me," he says.

Will unwraps the gift carefully, getting a peek at the word "camcorder", and gasps. "Mike, how much did this—"

"Nope, nothing," Mike says proudly. "My dad won it in a raffle at work. I know you don't want to use Bob's anymore, and my parents already have a camera. So I asked if I could have it and he said yes."

"Thank you," Will says, his heart warming with the thought that he was the first person Mike wanted to give this to. "I'll take good care of it."

Mike laughs and then nudges the box. "Open it, let's make a video."

Will obliges, ripping open the cardboard and laying out all the pieces

on the blanketed ground. It takes them a while to assemble it, mostly because Mike purposely tries to avoid the instruction manual, and won't let Will see it either. Eventually, though, there's a working camcorder with a tape already inside. It's the same model as Bob's, Will realizes, but it doesn't make his heart beat so much to look at it.

Will holds the camera up to his face and focuses it on Mike, so close that he could count the freckles on his cheeks. Then he whispers, "What do I say?"

Mike giggles, and it's like all of Castle Byers lights up. "I don't know. I didn't plan this far. Should we just make out?"

"Mike!" Will cries indignantly, although there's a small part of him that wants some kind of physical evidence that *this is real, we're real*. Something they can keep forever. It would be risky though. What if someone got ahold of the tape? But Mike suggesting they make out is already incriminating enough, so would it really hurt anything if they actually did it?

Will silences the thoughts in his brain by leaning up and pressing their lips together, the camera pointed somewhere in their general direction. Mike makes a noise of surprise, like he didn't think Will would do it, and then melts into the kiss.

They don't *make out* —Will would never be able to watch the video without blushing, if they did. They kiss for a while, though. Long enough for their lips to feel chapped in the cold air. Long enough for Will to be worried about wasting tape.

"It's not wasting, honey," Mike says, and smirks when Will, predictably, blushes. "Fine, you can shut it off."

Will pauses a moment on Mike's face, catching the light from the lantern illuminating him with a soft, warm glow, and then turns off the camera.

Mike pulls Will closer, lying next to him comfortably. The taller he gets, the more cramped Castle Byers becomes, but when they're curled around each other it doesn't matter. Will listens to the sound of Mike's chest rising and falling for a while, until Mike says, "You

know, Dustin told me that Emily Mitchell likes me.”

“She does?” Will scrunches his nose. “She always wears that Avon perfume. She smells like your grandma.”

“Yeah, I know. But Dustin thinks she’s *so hot, man, come on*,” Mike imitates him. “And then he wouldn’t stop asking me why I won’t ask her out.”

“Oh,” Will says, realizing why Mike brought this up. “Well, you know. It has been a year. Maybe we should tell them?”

Mike sighs. “Yeah, maybe.”

They never meant to hide their relationship for so long. They had full intentions of telling their friends once they’d been on a few dates and made sure that they really did want to be together, that Will wasn’t simply Mike’s rebound after breaking up with El. Only, the longer they stayed together, the more they realized how scary it would be for everyone to *know*. It’s something they can never take back or undo.

“You don’t want to?” Will asks. He twists his head to look at Mike closer.

“I don’t know. I *do*, but it’s—” he stops and sighs again.

“Scary,” Will finishes. “I know. But I think they would be okay with it, don’t you? They’ve never said anything really bad before.”

“Yeah, but they have *no* idea about us,” Mike says. “It will be a huge surprise, and what if they don’t take it well?”

Will finds Mike’s closest hand, slotting their fingers together. “We don’t have to do it right now, but we’ll have to eventually.”

“Can we wait until after Christmas, though?” Mike asks. “I want to have a good Christmas.”

Will’s heart skips a beat at the thought that Mike is so worried about telling their friends about their relationship. For all that Will worries about things—and he worries a *lot*—he has never considered a

possibility where their friends don't accept them. He hopes for both of their sakes that he's right.

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They plan to tell them at The Party's After-Christmas Party. They have it all planned out—after they watch *A Christmas Story*, but before they exchange gifts, Mike will stand up and say he needs to make an announcement, and he'll say, "Will and I have been dating for more than a year now, and we were afraid to tell you, but we hope you guys will still treat us the same way." And then they'll distract everyone by bringing out the gifts, so they won't ask too many questions and won't react badly.

Except, it doesn't happen like that. Because of course it doesn't.

It's the first year that they're having the party at the Byers' house. Usually they have it at the Wheeler's, since Karen goes all out with the food and decorations. This year, though, Joyce wanted to try her hand at entertaining, and all of Will's friends love her enough to agree, even if her food isn't as extravagant as Karen's.

Things start to go downhill when Max says, "I'm bored of *A Christmas Story*. We watch it *every year*."

"It's only been out for three years!" Dustin cries, aghast.

Lucas, who agrees to practically anything Max says, replies, "We can watch something else. Right, guys? I mean, has El even seen another Christmas movie?"

They all look over at El, who has a candy cane in her mouth and two more in her hands. "I have seen *Silent Night*, *Deadly Night*," she says. "It was good."

"Okay, we need to watch something new," Dustin reluctantly agrees. "We can't have her thinking Santa is a murderer."

Apologetically, Will says, "I don't think we have any other Christmas movies. And Family Video is closed."

"Damn it," Max sighs. She trails her fingers over the few movies Will

owns, stacked up next to a bunch of home videos. Will's heart starts beating faster when he realizes— *the tape* is in there. He put it there specifically because no one ever watches those tapes, since there are no important events documented on them. Only a few videos that Jonathan has shot over the years and forgotten about. "We should watch these!" Max says, like she's just had the greatest idea of her lifetime.

Will glances at Mike and watches Mike's eyes widen when he comes to the same conclusion that Will did. "Guys—"

Dustin reaches over and plucks one of the tapes out, and Will nearly sinks into the floor with relief when it isn't *the tape* . It's from Halloween two years ago, when Bob let Will take his camera out trick or treating. Ordinarily, Will wouldn't want to watch this tape. Not only does he get picked on by the older kids, he also has an episode. But he would watch anything to prevent them from finding the video proof of Mike and Will kissing before they're ready to tell them the truth, so he stays quiet.

Dustin sets up the adaptor and pops the tape in, all of them circling around the TV to watch. They all jump when Max scares them with her costume, and then she rolls her eyes at herself. "I was trying way too hard to be cool."

"I don't know, it worked on me," Lucas winks. Max rolls her eyes again.

The camera pans over to Mike's face, and Will feels a pang in his chest when he remembers just how much he liked him, and how oblivious Mike was. It all worked out, though.

On-screen Mike complains about Max, and real-life Max hits him on the arm. "I deserve that," he says.

Joyce bustles into the room with a plate of cookies, handing one out to each of them. "Oh, shut that off," she says when she recognizes what's on the TV. "It's Christmas."

"Sorry, Mrs. Byers," Lucas says, and takes the tape out of the player.

“See if you can find something from last Christmas, when you all went to the light festival in Chicago,” Joyce says, and then disappears back into the kitchen.

Dustin searches through the cabinet, and Will’s heart starts racing again.

“Hey guys,” Mike says, his voice squeaky. He clears his throat and then says again, more urgently, “Guys.”

“Hold on, I think I found it,” Dustin says, and pulls out *the tape* . “It’s the only one without a label, and none of these say Chicago.”

“ *Guys* ,” Mike repeats, but his voice dies down as everyone ignores him. El stares at him curiously as she unwraps her second candy cane.

The TV screen blinks to life, the inside of Castle Byers coming into focus, and then shifting over to Mike’s face. Watching it play in front of all their friends has Will’s palms sweating. He knows his face must be bright red, like Mike’s. They both know it’s hopeless. Their elaborate plan to tell their friends on their own time, with their own words, has flown out the window.

“What do I say?” Will hears himself ask. His voice sounds tinny through the speakers, but it’s undeniably him, and it’s undeniably Mike when he replies, “I don’t know. I didn’t plan this far. Should we just make out?”

Will feels like everyone moves in slow motion as their heads turn to face the two boys. Even Joyce steps out into the living room, her eyebrows up to her hairline.

“What does that—” Dustin starts, but then Lucas is turning back to the TV and gasping.

“Jesus Christ,” Mike whispers, crawling forward to pop the tape out, just as Will tilts the camera so both of their faces are in frame while they kiss. “So, uh—So, that was a, uh—Audition tape, for the school play. Right, Will?”

“An audition tape for the school play,” Lucas repeats, deadpan.

El's mouth is hanging open, which is a true testament to the shock factor of this video. It's pretty damn hard to shock El.

"Oh wow," Joyce breathes out. She leans over Will and kisses his forehead, silently handing him an extra cookie and then leaving.

"Is that *real*?" Max asks in disbelief. "You weren't just joking, were you?"

Mike seems ready to deny everything until he's blue in the face, but Will puts his hand over Mike's and shakes his head. There's no use, and they were going to tell them today anyway. Not like this, of course, but maybe the outcome would have been the same either way.

"We've been dating for more than a year," Will says, borrowing the words from their Plan A. "And we were going to tell you, today actually, but—we just hope you won't treat us differently. We're still Mike and Will, we're just—together, now."

"Woah," Max says first, her eyes wide. "Well, I think it's cool. One of my friends in California had two dads."

"Really?" Will asks. He didn't even know that was allowed.

"Not officially, but they all lived together and she called them both Dad," Max explains. "Anyway, I can't believe you didn't tell us for a year."

"We wanted to," Mike says, looking at the floor guiltily. "It's just. You know what people say."

"Well, we'll never say that shit," Dustin says, and then puts his hand right on top of Will's and Mike's intertwined ones. "Right, guys?"

They all pile their hands on top of each other, so Will can't tell where one hand begins and the other ends. He shares a small smile with Mike, his relief written plain across his face.

"Wait, that wasn't your sex tape we were watching, was it?"

"*Dustin* !"

Author's Note:

Thank you for reading! Comments make me really really happy if you have time for one :)

You can also find me at my [stranger things blog](#), where I'm taking prompts!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year / Happy Holidays / Happy Thursday if you don't celebrate!
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